

Small Business Exporter of the Year

"We have no limits to our world. We're only limited by our imagination"

AVTECH Software, a private corporation founded in 1988 by Michael Sigourney, is a computer hardware and software developer and manufacturer. Since its founding AVTECH has continuously expanded their offerings, growing from a startup software developer to a small business with international reach.

Their progression was not immediate but gradual, taking the addition of key personnel and co-owners including CFO, Anne Sigourney and President and COO, Richard Grundy. Anne joined AVTECH in 1997, managing the accounting, administration and human resources departments while Richard came onboard in 2001, growing through engineering leadership roles and now overseeing day to day operations and executing the strategic growth plan.

With key personnel in place AVTECH worked to create a strong infrastructure, including the 2008 SBA loan funded purchase of its headquarters at Cutler Mill in Warren, RI. The facility continues to be a center of growth for AVTECH as well as the surrounding area which has seen significant investment and improvement since that time.

In 2016, Grundy attended the SBA Emerging Leaders program, a seven month intensive entrepreneurship educating and training course focusing on financial literacy. Through this course Richard was introduced to the State Trade Expansion Program (STEP). The STEP program was created to increase the number of small businesses that export their product or service, as well as increasing the value of exports for those small businesses that already do.

AVTECH's ownership team began meeting with STEP grantee, The Chafee Center for International Business at Bryant University. The Chafee Center helped educate AVTECH on exporting services and how to effectively reach and expand in different international markets. In turn, AVTECH began to accelerate the sales and marketing of their Room Alert® product line to businesses around the world. Room Alert® products monitor computer rooms, data centers and other facilities for conditions such as temperature, humidity, power, flood, water leakage, smoke and fire, air flow, room entry, motion, cameras and more.

"We're thankful for the support and resources the SBA makes available to area businesses," said Grundy. "Through participation in the SBA Emerging Leaders program in 2016, we were introduced to the STEP program and the Chafee Center at Bryant University. The STEP program and the many other resources provided by the SBA and Chafee Center have been instrumental in our international growth over the past several years," he added. Over the next two years AVTECH participated in four STEP sponsored trade missions to Canada, UK, Israel, and Ireland – with another trip scheduled for April 2018 to Dubai. AVTECH's exporting business has grown from approximately 23% of their revenue prior to 2016 to over 30% in 2017, with forecasts projecting over 40% by 2020.

"Our strong network of international resellers have helped Room Alert protect businesses around the globe from downtime and damage caused by extreme environment conditions," said Sigourney. "Working with the STEP program and participating in state sponsored trade missions have made these global markets more accessible than ever before. We're proud to manufacture Room Alert in the USA and appreciate the resources the SBA provides that have helped us reach customers now in 186 of 196 countries," he noted.

For their accomplishments in expanding the global economy, the U.S. Small Business Administration is proud to recognize Michael Sigourney, CEO; Anne Sigourney, CFO; and Richard Grundy, President and COO of AVTECH Software, as the 2018 Rhode Island Small Business Exporter of the Year.